

Meeting Minutes

OLIVER RANCH CORE GROUP Bureau of Land Management Offices Tuesday, July 20, 2004

The meeting commenced at 8:35 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Loretta Asay, Kathy August, Bruce Beierle, Paul Buck, Dale Etheridge, Nancy Flagg, Pat Fleming, David Frommer, Laurie Howard, John McCarty, Mark Morse, Helen Mortenson, Alan O'Neill, Jackson Ramsey, Michael Reiland, Sharon Shafer, Ben Tocci, Henry Tom, Les Wallach, Pat Williams, Billie Young.

1. Introductions

The group welcomed new attendees Ben Tocci, Laurie Howard, and Sharon Shafer.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June 15, 2004, meeting were approved with no changes.

3. Review of Draft Talking Points/FAQ

Nancy Flagg distributed a draft of potential talking points for the science school, which can also be used as an FAQ on the future Oliver Ranch website (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Initiative office and BLM office*). She invited core group members to provide her with feedback and corrections, as well as to offer additional questions that might commonly be asked about the school. The following additional questions were suggested:

- ✓ Why a residential facility?
- ✓ Will scholarships be available?
- ✓ What will be taught there?
- ✓ Who is going to operate the facility?
- ✓ Will there be public access?
- ✓ How will safety and security be handled?
- ✓ Is this a Clark County School District project?
- ✓ Will this project cost the school district or taxpayers?
- ✓ What operations are going to take place at the Wild Horse and Burro facility?
- ✓ What is the source of the water that will supply the school?
- ✓ Was there public input into the design of the school?

Helen Mortenson asked if there is an intention to revisit what is known about the history of Red Rock Canyon. John McCarty replied that part of the environmental analysis will be from a historical perspective. Additional information about the history of the area may be provided on the science school website.

4. School Name

Michael Reiland announced that the BLM has decided upon a preliminary name for the school: the Red Rock National Desert Learning Center. This title is preliminary, pending further research into whether the word "national" may properly be used.

Helen Mortenson commented that including the word "Mojave" in the title had originally been discussed. When at the Oliver Ranch site, visitors do not naturally think of the desert. Michael replied that the BLM hopes, through this learning center, to export themes to other school-age

children around the country. By keeping the title generic, it allows it to be viewed as a national center.

Henry Tom asked if the Wild Horse and Burro facility will have a separate name. Billie Young noted that there is the potential for numerous subtitles to the overall name, such as the Wild Horse and Burro Facility at Red Rock National Desert Learning Center. This will allow a focus on numerous themes.

5. Overview of Wild Horse and Burro Facility

Billie Young, chair of the Wild Horse and Burro Committee, provided the group with general information about the need for the facility and how the idea for it came about (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Initiative office and BLM office*). She encouraged anyone wanting more in-depth information to contact her. Billie provided a brief history of the origins of the 1959 Wild Horse Annie Act, the establishment of the Nevada Wild Horse Range in 1961, and the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

There are wild horses in 10 states, but Nevada has more than 60% of the total population as well as 97 of the 187 herd management areas. The maintenance of wild horses and burros has resulted in large management issues and budget issues. It is also an emotionally and politically charged issue. Some 14,000 horses are currently in long-term holding and are typically held for 5 to 10 years, at a cost of approximately \$1.25 per animal, per day. There is little awareness among the public about the rules and regulations related to wild horses.

Billie indicated that, in Nevada, the estimated appropriate management level is around 14,000 horses, which equates to the carrying capacity of the land – meaning the animals are in balance with all of the wildlife on the range. If Nevada were at this optimal number, there would be approximately 6,000 excess animals per year going into the adoption program or a sanctuary. If the numbers are not reduced to this level, the land suffers and the animals suffer.

An education center is needed to promote public awareness about wild horses and the adoption program and to teach the public about how the management of herds relates to the larger ecosystem. This center would also provide a network of support for people who choose to adopt as well as provide a venue for research on genetics, diet, hoof issues, contraception, and social behavior. The Red Rock Herd Management area covers two-thirds of the conservation area. Approximately 2.3 million visitors could potentially be reached, as well as the school children visiting the science school and the visitor center.

Alan O'Neill pointed out that nationally there is no wild horse and burro facility dedicated to education. Since Nevada has more horses than any other state, it is a logical place for a national educational program, especially because of the number of visitors. Billie noted that the current concept calls for educating people at the visitor center, and those interested in adopting could then visit the horse and burro facility to view animals ready for adoption. Mark Morse emphasized that it is not planned to be another long-term holding facility, but rather a location for holding approximately 25-30 horses specifically for adoptions.

Paul Buck asked what other states have successful adoption programs and how they are structured. Billie replied that, across the board, the adoption programs are rather weak, especially in the western states. She noted 75% of the horses from the West are actually adopted into eastern states. The current adoption program is not user friendly. Adoptions are either scheduled by appointment or at the BLM's convenience, which doesn't always meet the needs of those interested in adopting, and there is no process for returning horses. She sees the facility as a user-

friendly, “storefront” operation that can serve to promote partnerships among the BLM, the National Wild Horse and Burro Association, the Friends of Red Rock Canyon, and the Red Rock Interpretive Association.

6. Standing Reports

A. *Line and Space Architects*

Henry Tom and Les Wallach of Line and Space Architects provided an update on recent activities (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Initiative office and BLM office*). Representatives of the firm toured the Las Vegas Springs Preserve on June 14. The visitor center there is 25,000 s.f., budgeted at \$45 million, and expected to attract 600,000 visitors per year. There may be opportunities to coordinate with this facility to carry general messages about water in a desert environment, whereas the Red Rock Visitor Center could focus more specifically on the desert itself. To further this potential collaboration, Henry noted the importance of inviting the Springs Preserve people to attend the upcoming focus sessions on the Red Rock Visitor Center.

On June 26, Les Wallach visited the Campbell Creek Science Center in Alaska. It is about 8 years old, on the edge of urban development with access to a lot of wild country. The planners initially hoped to have a residential facility, but with budget cutting that feature was lost. The facility was originally run by the Alaska Natural History Association but is now run by the BLM. It is used as a field trip location only for day trips, focused primarily on 6th graders, and is not fully tied into the local school district. The center is staffed with four permanent BLM employees, but many volunteers and hourly employees supplement the staff. Jackson Ramsey also noted that this center is funded with appropriated money. Campbell Creek costs are close to \$600,000 per year, with \$100,000 in fee income, \$70,000 in in-kind contributions, and approximately \$50,000 per year in grants. The remainder is provided by the BLM.

In an update on the Oliver Ranch programming document, Les Wallach reported that the architects received comments back from BLM and have made those revisions. A final document will be provided to the BLM this week.

The architects noted that representatives of the firm will attend a tour of four wild horse and burro facilities in July. They will also be on site at Oliver Ranch on July 27-29 doing site analysis and will visit the Ethel M factory to look at its waste treatment facility.

Henry Tom provided the group with an update on the overall project schedule (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Initiative office and BLM office*). Three master plan concepts will be developed. As soon as schematic design is complete on Oliver Ranch, Line and Space will immediately begin on the programming of the Red Rock visitor center, which should occur around Dec. 10 for approximately a week. Line and Space is looking to schedule a kick-off meeting for the visitor center sometime around the end of September. This will allow the environmental analysis to begin, allow confirmation of the existing site location, and set the direction for writing agendas for the December planning sessions. Henry noted that a lot of preliminary work on the visitor center has already been accomplished. Two shifts may include more emphasis on the wild horse and burro facility and tying into the bigger picture of other facilities like the Las Vegas Springs Preserve.

Alan O'Neill suggested that Line and Space interact with Shapins Associates, which has been contracted by the U.S. Forest Service to design the Lower Kyle Canyon improvements. The work of both firms should be connected. Michael Reiland said he would provide the contact information to Line and Space.

B. *UNLV*

Nancy Flagg provided an update on UNLV's activities related to Oliver Ranch. A web coordinator, Megan Iudice, has been hired and begins August 2. She will begin work on an Oliver Ranch web site and will determine the logistics and federal requirements in collaboration with Michael Reiland.

UNLV will work with the Fund-Raising and Partnerships Committee to identify foundations, organizations, and businesses to approach for private funds and in-kind contributions. Only initial feelers are planned at this time, since, in some cases, it may take sustained contact over several years to encourage gifts.

Work is continuing on efforts to update committee rosters, review committee mission statements, and determine committee charges.

Nancy reminded attendees that she welcomes input about issues that need to be handled, outreach that should occur, and keeping communication lines open. She is especially interested in reconnecting with people who have not recently attended core group meetings. The meetings are open to any interested person.

C. *Red Rock Canyon National Recreation Area*

John McCarty provided an update on the environmental assessment (EA). There are two phases to the study – a discovery phase and the actual assessment. The purpose is to develop the EA in conjunction with the conceptual design. A survey is being conducted of rare species for all 320 acres. This will allow Line and Space to be sensitive in their design of building footprints and will feed into the conceptual design. A cultural survey was completed last week, and work is continuing on a study of the animals and plants. Final reports should be completed by October, with interim reports provided to BLM as well. John noted that the scope of the EA will be revisited as it proceeds, because new things are learned which can lead to additional study.

Helen Mortenson asked about the hydrology study. John replied that it is not part of the EA per se. Michael Reiland added that the BLM is conducting the hydrology study. The wells continue to be delayed because the U.S. Geological Survey team has been detained on another project in Montana. Helen asked if there was a deadline and noted her concerns with the delays. The hydrology report is of paramount concern to the entire project.

Paul Buck asked if the EA will identify structures for the national historic register. John replied that an assessment of the main structures was conducted in 1999. Paul asked about 2 other outlying structures. John said they are being surveyed and a literature search is underway.

7. Committee Reports

A. *Design Oversight Committee*

Chair David Frommer said the committee met yesterday (July 19). They are collecting a variety of reference documents and summaries and will create a binder for use by Line and Space and the BLM. The committee plans to develop a document with a broad overview of all the processes going on, so that a flexible, broad picture can be provided to everyone on the core group. The committee generated a proposal to establish a building committee, which will be chaired by Angie Lara of the BLM. The committee determined that, on an as-needed basis, members of the committee will make themselves available for public presentations. The committee provided

some guidance to Billie Young on questions they would like answered regarding the Wild Horse and Burro facility on the upcoming facility tours.

B. *Educational Programs Committee*

Chair Paul Buck reported that the committee held one meeting to go through the FOSS kits currently used in the Clark County School District. These kits address the topics of water, mixtures and solutions, landforms, environment, variables, and solar. The committee is meeting again tomorrow (July 21) to begin the detailed process of developing individual curricula/programs that will meet the school district's needs and the major themes they want the 5th graders to study. The committee is considering having students choose a question they would like to study, rather than providing a menu of activities.

C. *Fund-Raising and Partnerships Committee*

Michael Reiland reported on behalf of Chair Blaine Benedict that the committee has not met, but plans to set a new meeting soon.

D. *NEPA Committee*

No report beyond the update provided by John McCarty.

E. *Operations Committee*

Chair Jackson Ramsey reported that the committee hasn't met, but plans to set a new meeting soon.

F. *Other Uses Committee*

Chair Patricia Williams reported that the committee will most likely not meet until after schematic designs are provided, at which time other uses can be reviewed in terms of whether they should be mission driven or revenue driven.

G. *Wild Horse and Burro Committee*

Chair Billie Young reported that committee members will be visiting 4 facilities in the region: Ridgecrest, Hurricane, Susanville/Litchfield, and Palomino. A report will be provided at the next core group meeting.

H. *Building Committee*

Michael Reiland reported that this new committee will be chaired by Angie Lara. A copy of the mission statement was provided by email to the core group (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Initiative office and BLM office*). Meetings will be held immediately after each core group meeting.

Helen Mortenson asked to clarify if all committees are open to everyone. Michael assured her that they are and, as meeting dates are determined, he passes along the information to the core group list.

8. New Business

On August 19 the BLM has invited 8 people from other science schools located on government land to talk about issues they ran into, how they handled them, and what they've learned. This will be an open discussion, all-day meeting at the BLM headquarters.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

2004 CORE GROUP MEETING SCHEDULE

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| August 17, 2004 | UNLV | 8:30 A.M. | Paradise Campus – Bldg. 400, Rm. 401 <i>(Corner of Tropicana & Swenson)</i> |
| September 21, 2004 | UNLV | 8:30 A.M. | Paradise Campus – Bldg. 400, Rm. 401 <i>(Corner of Tropicana & Swenson)</i> |
| October 19, 2004 | BLM | 8:30 A.M. | 4701 N. Torrey Pines Dr. <i>(Just north of Rancho & Craig Rd.)</i> |